



Differential Effects of Online Instruction on a Variety of EFL Courses

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Abstract

I taught 4 types of EFL courses to undergraduate students online: Grammar, writing, culture and study skills using Blackboard and Nicenet. Online instruction was used as a supplement to traditional in-class instruction. Significant differences were found between pre- and post-test scores in writing, grammar and culture but not in study skills. The achievement level was higher among active participants who posted threads and shared in the discussion than passive participants who were just browsers and did not write anything, and between members of the latter group and those who were not registered in the online courses at all. The effect of online instruction on students' attitudes is also reported.

1. Introduction

Thousands of students and instructors around the world are using Online Management Systems like Blackboard, WebCT, Online Learning and Moodle in teaching all kinds of courses including EFL and ESL. Despite the glamour of technology, its use does not guarantee students' success in learning nor higher levels of achievement than traditional classroom techniques. The effective use of technology depends on how it is used, what is being taught, and for how long. Like many parts of the world, use of online courses in EFL instruction in some higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia is not yet known due to insufficient numbers of PC's, lack of internet connectivity, lack of trained instructors, and lack of administrative support. Few individual attempts are available here and there. Few instructors are using OWCP and Moodle to teach writing, grammar, literature, linguistics and others. However, the effect of such practices on Saudi college students' achievement has not been investigated yet. This author has been using online instruction since the year 2000. She has taught 12 online courses in EFL and translation using a variety of Online Course Management Systems. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of online instruction on the acquisition of four types of EFL course by Saudi female college students: writing,

grammar, culture and study skills. It tried to answer the following questions: (1) Is there a significant differences between students registered in online courses and those not registered in their achievement level as measured by the posttest? (1) Does the effect of online instruction on student achievement differ from one language course to another? (3) Are active participants better achievers than passive participants, and passive participants better achievers than non-users? (4) Does the frequency of using the online course correlate with the student's achievement level? (5) Does online instruction in the different language courses have different effects on students' attitudes?

Four types of EFL courses are subject to investigation in the present study: writing (taught Fall 2002), grammar (taught spring 2004), culture and study skill (taught Spring 2003), which were taught to students in semesters 1, 4, 5 and 6 of the translation program at the College of Languages and Translation (COLT), King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia using Blackboard and Nicenet from home.

2. Subjects

Four samples of female students participated in the study. The following is a brief description of each sample:

- i. A total of 113 female students were enrolled in the *writing* course (51 students were registered in the online course; 62 students were not). Both groups were in their first semester of the translation program. Their median age was 18 years, and the range was 17-19.
- ii. A total of 230 students were enrolled in the *grammar* course (64 students were registered in the online course; 166 students were not). Both groups were in their first semester of the translation program. Their median age was 18 years, and the range was 17-19.
- iii. A total of 80 female students were enrolled in the *culture* course (56 students were registered in the online course; 24 students were not). They were in their fourth semester of college. Their median age was 20 years, and the range was 19-21.

- iv. A total of 11 students were registered in the online *Study skills* course; 186 students were not. The students were in semester 4, 5, and 6. Their median age was 21, and the range was 19-22.

All the students were majoring in translation at the College of Languages and Translation, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. In semesters 1-4 of the translation program, students are required to take 4 levels of listening, speaking, reading and writing courses, 2 levels of vocabulary building courses, 3 levels of grammar courses, a dictionary skills course and a target culture course. In semesters 5-10, students take 6 linguistics, 18 translation and 6 interpreting courses. The subjects were all Saudi and were all native speakers of Arabic.

Students in the Writing and Grammar Classes had no prior experience with online instruction. Those registered in the *culture* course had prior experience with online instruction 3 semesters back, when they were enrolled in the Blackboard writing course. Only level 4 students registered in the study skills course had prior experience with online instruction. Level 5 and 6 students had not. In all the courses, the registered students constituted the experimental group, and unregistered students constituted the control group. Both groups were exposed to the same in-class instruction. In addition, the experimental group was exposed to online instruction. Active participants are those who posted messages, whereas passive participants are those who just read and browsed the online course. Percentages of registered and unregistered and active and passive participants are shown in Table 1 below.

Table (1)

% of Students Registered in the Online Courses

	College Level	Class size	N (Registered Students)	Registered Students		N (Unregistered)
				% Active Participants	% Passive Participants	
Writing	1	113	51	31%	14%	55%
Grammar	1	230	74	16%	16%	68%
Culture	4	80	56	50%	20%	30%
Study Skills	4, 5, 6	197	11	1%	5%	94%

3. In-class Instruction

In all the courses, the experimental and control groups were exposed to the same traditional in-class instruction. The writing, grammar and study skills course were taught for 12 weeks, but the culture course was taught for 6 weeks only. Students in the **writing** course studied *Interactions One* by Segal and Pavlik (1997). Each chapter was completed over a week (four hours), and the book was covered over 12 weeks. Each week, students in both groups completed all of the skills, exercises and writing tasks in the chapter and wrote two one-paragraph essays.

Students in the **grammar** course studies the same grammar textbook *Understanding and Using English Grammar* by Betty Azar (3rd Edition) and completed the same exercises and grammatical topics in that textbook. The topics covered in class were: *parts of speech, prepositions, prepositional phrases, transitive and intransitive verbs, linking verbs, regular and irregular verbs, adverb placement, information, tag, negative and yes-no questions, negatives, singular and plural, use of definite and indefinite articles, pronouns, subject-verb agreement, 9 tenses, modals, pronunciation of –ed, -s at the end of words, spelling of –ing, -ed, -es.*

In the **culture** course, the students studied the same material about British culture which was taken from “World Book Encyclopedia” on CD-ROM, supplemented by 200 pictures scanned from magazines, and from the author’s collection of postcards and pictures of Britain. The in-class material covered the following topics: *Definition of culture, difference between culture and civilization, the process of enculturation, characteristics of culture, cultural patterns, cultural traits, multiculturalism, cultural anthropology, cross-cultural, ethnography. Location of the UK, different names, political divisions of the UK, general characteristics, British colonies, British history, Industrial Revolution, British government (National government, regional governments and local governments), the constitution, parliament, prime minister and cabinet, politics in the UK, political parties, population, ancestry, language, city life, rural life, food and drink, recreation, religion, educational system, health care system, museums and libraries, the arts, land regions, rivers and lakes, climate, economy, service industries, manufacturing, agriculture, mining, fishing, energy resources, international*

trade, imports and exports transportation, communication (post office, newspapers, radio and T.V.).

As for the *study skills* course, it was not part of the COLT program. It was created to help the students with their academic problems. Therefore, no in-class instruction or material was involved.

4. Online Instruction

In addition to the traditional in-class instruction, the experimental group used an online course with Blackboard or Nicenet. Blackboard was used for teaching writing, and Nicenet was used for teaching grammar, culture and study skills. The experimental group used their own PC's and the Internet from home, as the internet was inaccessible from campus. The students were given the class key and they enrolled themselves. Prior to online instruction, the students' computer literacy skills were assessed by a questionnaire. A tutorial was given to them for reference. The online course components were described and used one at a time. Instructions on how to use certain course components were also posted in the "Announcements" area. Online instruction was initiated by posting a welcome note, by starting a discussion topic and by sending a group e-card. The author continued to do so every now and then throughout the semester. The following is a description of the discussion topics and websites used in each course:

4.1 Writing

Grammar and writing websites were added in the "External Links" in Blackboard according to the specific writing skills and grammatical point covered in each chapter and in the classroom such as: *capital letters, irregular verbs, Verb Tenses, Parts of Speech, Articles, Pronouns, Questions, Several grammar topics, Writing Den, English Club, Recipes, This Day in History, Fact Book Encyclopedia, Quotations, Dictionary, Discovery*. The students posted responses and threads, poems, stories, sayings and proverbs, jokes and riddles on the discussion board. They responded to and commented on what their classmates or instructors had written. They wrote a paragraph about themselves in their Homepage. They sent their homework through the "Send File

to Instructor”. They answered six quizzes which were used for practice not assessment. They checked the external links and course resources.

4.3 Grammar

Every week, a grammar website (hyperlink) related to the grammar topic covered in class was added in “Link Sharing”. The links contained explanations, examples, exercises and quizzes and a daily grammar lessons. Questions that required use of a particular tense or grammatical structure were posted in the “Conferencing” area of Nicenet. The students could post short paragraphs on any topic of their choice.

4.3 Culture

Some websites (hyperlinks) about British culture were added in the “*Link Sharing*” area of Nicenet such as: Each week, a question or a discussion topic about that aspect of British culture under study in class was posted in the “*Conferencing*” area. The following discussion topics were posted: *British ancestry, UK memories and experiences, famous British people, British educational system, British population, Sports in the UK, ancient civilizations, cities in the UK, well-known places in the UK, Windsor Castle, conflict in Northern Ireland, British Ministries, culture terms and their Arabic equivalents, and examples of multicultural societies and civilizations*. Articles about topics discussed in class were posted for extensive reading. Questions and discussion topics about British people, sports, the British educational system, ministries, tourist places, and major cities were posted. The students gave the Arabic equivalents to culture terminology, posted answers to and information about the cultural topics posted and viewed pictures showing aspects of British way of life.

4.4 Study Skills

A lecture and a Powerpoint presentation entitled “How to Study” were posted in Nicenet. Students posted questions about academic problems such as spelling problems, how to translate a long text in a short time (increasing translation speed), and test preparation in the “Conferencing” area.

4.5 The Instructor's Role

Throughout the semester, the author served as a facilitator. She provided technical support on word-processing, using the different components of the online course, and responded to individual students' needs, comments and requests for certain sites. The author sent public and private messages to encourage the students to interact and communicate. She had to look for relevant websites and post them in the "Resources" and "Link Sharing" areas. She had to post questions and discussion topic and write model responses every week. The author did not correct spelling and grammatical mistakes. Using the online course was optional as many students had no internet access and were not able to participate. Students were given extra credit for using the online course.

5. Procedures

5.1 Writing

Before instruction, the experimental and control groups were pre-tested. They took the same pretest that consisted of writing of an essay. Test instructions specified the essay length and essay components related to the tasks and skills to be practiced in the book.

At the end of the semester, both groups were post-tested. They took the same posttest that was part of a three-hour final exam. The final exam contained the following: (1) a letter-writing task, (2) four texts with objective questions covering all the grammar and writing tasks practiced over the semester and (3) the posttest essay that the students had never seen nor practiced in class or the online course. The essay topic was concrete and within the students' background knowledge. The test instructions specified the essay length and essay components that were taught and practiced during the course such as the topic sentence, types and number of supporting ideas, use of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, conjunctions and cohesive ties...etc. The posttest instructions were as follows: *In your opinion, which is the greatest invention of the twentieth century? Write a paragraph between 10-15 lines in which you give 3-5 reasons to support your answer. Give your paragraph a title. Your paragraph should have a topic sentence and a conclusion. Use simple, compound and complex sentences.*

Pay attention to verb tenses. Add transitional words and conjunctions where necessary. Indent, insert punctuation mark, and capitalize words where necessary. When you finish, reread your paragraph and edit it. Double-check your spelling, use of punctuation marks, indentation, capitalization, conjunctions, tenses...etc.

The students were not allowed to use their dictionaries during the final exam session. All pretest and post-test essays of both groups were holistically graded based on a general impression of content, organization, cohesion, word choice, language use and mechanics. All essays were read once and a quality rating of high, above average, average, below average and low was given to each paper. Essays were then read for a second time and each was assigned a grade.

5.2 Grammar

Before instruction, the experimental and control groups were pre-tested. They took the same grammar pretest that consisted of questions covering the grammatical topics to be studied. At the end of the semester, both groups took the same posttest that covered all the grammatical topics covered throughout the semester: (1) *Fill in the blanks in the passage with an article where necessary;* (2) *Write if each noun is Count or Non-count as it is used in the above text. Use C or NC;* (3) *Write the part of speech of each word as it is used in the above text. Use abbreviations;* (4) *Write the plural of each word as it is used in the above text;* (5) *Write the plural form of the noun where necessary;* (6) *Write the singular form of the noun where necessary;* (7) *Use the correct tense of the verbs in parentheses or add a modal where necessary;* (8) *Read the following paragraph, then make questions as indicated;* (9) *How is -ed or -es pronounced in the following words;* (10) *Write the past participle of each verb;* (11) *Fill in the blanks with a pronoun;* (12) *Complete the following sentences;* (13) *Change nouns and pronouns to plural where necessary. Make any necessary changes;* (14) *Underline the correct word;* (15) *Fill in the blanks with an expression of quantity or an indefinite pronoun.*

5.3 Culture

Before instruction, the experimental and control groups were pre-tested. They took the same culture pretest that consisted of questions about the United Kingdom. At the end of the module (week 6), both groups took the same posttest that consisted of 4 culture terminology questions and 10 questions about British culture: (1) *Translate the following terms into Arabic: Duchess, hereditary peer, ministerial offices, cross-cultural, metropolitan areas, High Court of Judiciary, trade unions, enterprise zones, archbishop, English public schools, medical insurance, notable, ethnography, lawmaking body.* (2) *Give the English equivalent to the following 12 Arabic terms related to British culture.* (3) *For each of the following cultural terms, give as many derivatives: legislative, education, invasion, unitary, commuters.* (4) *Break each of the following cultural terms into its component parts (prefixes, suffixes and roots) by using dashes: Enculturation, inheritance, industrialization, nationalist, descendants, consumption.* (5) *Do you think the UK is a democracy? Give at least 3 reasons to support your answer* (6) *Give at least 3 examples of changes that took place in the UK after World War II.* (7) *London is a culturally rich environment. Give at least 5 examples that show that.* (8) *Write a short definition for the following: Jutes, NHS, Tory, Nationalistic Parties, Assembly of Wales, Gaelic, Prime Minister* (9) *What is the role of the House of Lords in the British legal system?* (10) *Give at least 3 aspects of British culture that you have seen in the POWERPOINT pictures displayed in class?* (11) *Draw a diagram that shows the structure (components) of the British health care system and the governmental units in charge of it.* (12) *Read the following paragraph about Britain then answer the questions: What cultural traits of the Scotland are shown?* (13) *What cultural patterns are shown in the paragraph?* (14) *Read the following paragraph about Ireland then answer the questions: What elements of Irish culture are illustrated by the paragraph?*

5.4 Study Skills

No pre and posttest were used, as the course was not part of the translation program and only 6% of the students were registered in the online course.

All pre and posttests for all the groups were blindly graded by the author. The students wrote their ID numbers instead of their names. An answer key was used.

In addition, all the students answered a post-treatment questionnaire that consisted of several open-ended questions. The questionnaire aimed at finding out how the students felt about their online learning experience.

6. Test Validity and Reliability

The posttests are believed to have content validity as they aimed at assessing the students' writing ability, grammatical knowledge and cultural awareness. The tasks required in the posttest were comparable to those covered in the book and practiced in class. In addition, the test instructions were phrased clearly and the examinee's task was defined.

Concurrent validity of the posttest was determined by establishing the relationship between the students' scores on the posttest and their course grade. The validity coefficient was .89 for the writing course, .78 for the grammar course and .68 for the culture course. Concurrent validity was also determined by establishing the relationship between the students' scores on the posttest and their scores on the midterm test. The validity coefficient was .69 for the writing test, .72 for the grammar test and .64 for the culture test.

Since the author was the instructor of the experimental and control groups and the scorer of the pretest and posttest essays, estimates of inter-rater reliability were necessary. A 30% random sample of the pre and posttest papers was selected and double-scored. 3 colleagues who hold a Ph.D. degree scored the pre and posttest samples. The scoring procedures were explained to each, and they followed the same scoring procedures and same answer key that the author utilized. The marks given by each rater were correlated with the author's. Inter-rater correlations were .89 for the writing course, .98 for the grammar course and .96 for the culture course.

Furthermore, examinee reliability was calculated The Kuder-Richardson formula 20 for essay tests and Kuder-Richardson formula 21'. The examinee reliability coefficient was .91 for the writing course, .85 for the grammar course and .87 for the culture course. .

7. Data Analysis

The pretest and post-test raw scores for the writing, grammar and culture courses were converted into percentages. The mean, median, standard deviation, standard error and range were computed for the pretest and posttest scores. To find out whether there was a significant difference in ability between the experimental and control groups prior to instruction, an independent sample T-test was run using the pretest scores.

Since difference in writing ability and grammar knowledge existed between the experimental and control groups prior to the experiment, and the two groups were unequal in size, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was run using the posttest scores as the response variable and the pretest scores as the covariate to correct for chance differences that existed when the subjects were assigned to treatment groups. This correction resulted in the adjustment of group means for pre-existing differences caused by sampling error and reduction of the size of the error variance of the analysis.

To find out whether each group made any progress as a result of instruction, a within group paired T-test was computed to find out whether there was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores of each group.

As for the study skills course, no data were available because few students (6%) were registered in the course and they posted a total of 7 messages only. No course grades were given as the course was not part of the COLT program.

8. Results

8.1 Effect of Instruction on Achievement

8.1.1 Writing

Results of the independent T-test showed significant differences between the experimental and control groups in their writing ability before the writing instruction began ($T = 4.55$, $df = 111$, $P < .01$). The control group outperformed the experimental group (Means = 70% and 55% respectively).

Results of the paired T-test showed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the experimental and control group at the .01 level, suggesting that student achievement in the experimental group significantly improved as a result of using a combination of online writing instruction and traditional in-class writing instruction ($T = 12.14$; $df = 61$). Similarly, a significant difference between the pretest and post-test mean scores of the control group was found at the .01 level, suggesting that achievement in the control group significantly improved as a result of the traditional in-class writing instruction which depended on the textbook only ($T = 4.6$, $df = 50$). However, T-test results alone do not show which group made higher gains. After adjusting for initial group differences on the pretests, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on adjusted post-test means revealed significant differences between the experimental and control groups ($F = 29.84$, $P < .0001$). The experimental group made higher gains in writing achievement than the experimental group as a result of online instruction. The effect size, i.e. degree of superiority of the experimental treatment over the control treatment was .55.

8.1.2 Grammar

Results of the T-test showed significant differences between the experimental and control groups in their grammatical knowledge before grammar instruction began ($T = 2.8$; $df = 228$; $P < .005$). The Experimental group outperformed the control group (median = 49% & 46% respectively).

Results of the paired T-test revealed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the experimental group at the .01 level, suggesting that student achievement in the experimental group significantly improved as a result of using a combination of online and traditional in-class grammar instruction ($T = 7.5$; $df = 63$). Similarly, a significant difference between the pre and posttest mean scores of the

control group was found at the .01 level, suggesting that achievement in the control group significantly improved as a result of the in-class grammar instruction which depended on the textbook only ($T = 10.29$; $df = 165$). After adjusting for initial group differences on the pretests, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on adjusted post-test means revealed significant differences between the experimental and control groups ($F = 117.23$; $df = 227$; $P < .0001$). The experimental group made higher gains in grammar achievement than the control group as a result of online instruction. The effect size was .51.

8.1.3 Culture

Results of the T-test showed no significant differences between the pretest mean scores of the experimental and control groups, indicating no significant differences in background knowledge of British culture between the experimental and control groups before online and in-class instruction began ($T = 1.10$; $df = 79$; $P < .27$). By contrast, results of the paired T-test revealed a significant difference between the pre and posttest mean scores of the experimental group at the .01 level, suggesting that experimental students' achievement significantly improved as a result of exposure to a combination of in-class and online instruction from home ($T = 13.17$; $df = 39$). Similarly, a significant difference between the pre and posttest mean scores of the control group was found at the .01 level ($T = 9.60$; $df = 39$), suggesting that achievement in the control group significantly improved as a result of in-class instruction which depended on the handout, LCD-presentations and pictures only. The independent sample T-test results indicated significant differences between the experimental and control group posttest means scores ($T = 3.38$; $df = 78$; $P < .002$), suggesting that achievement (cultural awareness) in the experimental group was higher than that in the control group as a result of online instruction.

8.1.4 Study Skills

The *study skills* course proved to be ineffective and failed to attract a sufficient number of students or contribution to allow for carrying out statistical analysis.

8.2 Correlation between Posttest Scores and Frequency Usage

Table (2) shows the total number of discussion messages posted together with the median and maximum number of messages posted. Findings of the present study indicated that there is a significant positive correlation between the posttest scores of the experimental group and the frequency of using the online course. The correlation coefficient was .51 for the writing course, .38 for the grammar course, .37 for the culture course. All correlations were significant at the .01 level. This suggests that a student's achievement in the writing, grammar and culture courses correlated with the number of contributions she made to the discussion topics and questions posted in the online course. This means that high and low usage frequencies of the online course were found to correlate with high and low achievement as measured by the posttest. It can be concluded that using the online course did contribute to the students' overall performance level.

Table (2)
Distribution of Discussion Messages Posted by Experimental Groups

	Total Group Posts	Median	Maximum Individual Messages
Writing	283	3	70
Grammar	182	3	50
Culture	156	2	6
Study Skills	7	1	5

8.3 Effect on Online Instruction Attitudes

Analysis of student comments and responses to the post-treatment questionnaires in all four courses revealed positive attitudes towards online learning and the course under study. All the students found the online course useful and fun, as they considered it a new way of leaning and doing homework. It heightened their motivation and raised their self-esteem. It created a warm-climate between the students and instructor and among students themselves. They became more assertive in writing, discussing and expressing their points of view. They found the exercises useful as they provided more practice and gave feedback. They helped clarify difficult points and

helped the students review for the tests. They could use the online course any time and as many times as they needed. It made the class material easier. Students could exchange information and learnt how and where to search for information. They also used the material posted as a reference.

Some of the negative aspects of online teaching are that some students do not post any responses if not prompted by the instructor and if the instructor does not post new topics and post a sample response. Few students just cut and paste information and stories and some repeat the same information, story, response provided by others, or start a new thread dealing with the same topic instead of posting a response under that topic. Some write “Thank you” notes and complements instead of real responses. Others students just browse and read rather than write.

Inadequate participation in the online course was due to lack of computers and internet connectivity in college and at home. Some students did not take online instruction seriously as online instruction was not used by other instructors and students at COLT. The author could not make the online course mandatory and could not allocate a proportion of the course grade to it. Using the internet as a learning tool was not part of some students’ culture. Some were so used to traditional instruction that depended on the book. They indicated that they were not net browsers and they preferred to read books and references. They also believed that online courses should be used for fun not for credit and serious studying. Many Saudi college students do extra work for grades only. If online learning is part of test and grades, some students will not participate. That is why few students registered in the study skills course, which was not part of the translation program, despite the fact that the aim of the course was to help students with their academic problems. The author did not have sufficient time in the classroom to provide feedback, brainstorm topics before and after posting, and to instruct the students on how to use the online course.

1. Discussion and Conclusion

Significant difference were found between the experimental and control groups in writing, grammar and culture achievement as measured by the posttest suggesting that achievement in the experimental group improved as a result of using a combination

of online and in-class instruction. This means that use of online instruction proved to be a powerful tool for improving students' achievement. Findings of the present study also indicated that active participants made higher gains than passive participants who in turn made higher gains than students not registered in the online course at all. This finding is consistent with findings of prior studies. For example, Liou (1997) found that the reading comprehension and writing skills of 15 EFL college students using the web-based materials (texts) improved more than those of students not using the materials. Levine, Ferenz and Reves (2000) also found that the computerized learning environment contributed to the development of critical literacy skills in EFL more than the conventional learning environment. The computer-networked environment combined the security and support of the language learning classroom and exposure to authentic reading material.

Moreover, the present study revealed positive effects of online instruction on students' attitudes towards online instruction and the writing, grammar and culture courses. This finding is also consistent with findings of other studies. For instance, Lin (2004) found that international students' attitudes towards ESL were positively related to their attitudes toward computers. Students' prior experience in ESL was not related to their attitudes toward computers. Their attitude towards ESL was positively related to their perceived computer competency improvement and their experience in ESL was positively related to their perceived computer competency improvement. In Chen (2003) study freshmen and sophomores students in Taiwan expressed significantly positive attitudes toward educational technology use in EFL instruction. The students who preferred the active, intuitive, verbal, and global learning styles showed positive attitudes toward technology-integrated EFL instruction. Chen's that in the future, the most respected EFL teachers will seek to enhance their instruction with activities and experiences made available through the Internet and computer assisted technologies. To respond to differences in student learning style preferences, EFL teachers need to use a wide variety of technological forms.

Furthermore, examination of the total number of students registered in the author's online courses presented in Table (2) shows that the culture course had the

highest percentage of registered students. This is because those students had prior experience in online instruction when they were taking writing in semester 1. Andreatta (2003) found that students who had previous successful experience with web-based instruction were more positively affected by the inclusion of affective feedback than students who had no prior experience. The implications of this research suggest that instructors provide affective feedback in the form of supportive language to all students because, while it does not positively influence all students, it may influence particular subgroups and does not appear to negatively impact the others.

Finally, the present study recommends that online instruction be extended to other language course and other college levels. Students of different college levels enrolled in course focusing on the same skill such as reading or writing (i.e., lower and upper class students) can share the same online course together with their instructors. To encourage the students to participate, the instructor has to prompt and motivate them and rules for using the online course should be made clear. The minimum number of posts should be specified. Administrative support is also required in order for the students to take the online course seriously. Another Management System like WebCT, Moodle or Blackboard may be used instead of Nicenet as students will be able to edit, upload pictures and Powerpoint presentation, and use online chat and to enable the instructor to design her own quizzes. The effect of online instruction on other language skills taught at COLT such as reading, listening, speaking, vocabulary building, and dictionary usage is still open for further investigation.

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